Dalit Hindus of Sindh Region in Pakistan

†*497. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the standard of living of backward Hindus in the Sindh region of Pakistan is below poverty line;

(b) if so, whether any Non-Government Organization of Pakistan has carried out any survey in this regard; and

(c) if so, the efforts being made to improve the condition of backward Hindus by Government of India after negotiating with Government of Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir. There are reports of Pakistan's Hindu citizens in areas of Sindh, Pakistan, living in conditions of economic insecurity and hardship.

(b) Yes, Sir. There have been studies by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on this subject.

(c) Government is aware of these reports.

Decline in the profit of MTNL

*498. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MTNL has reported 36.5 per cent decline in its profits during the third quarter ended December, 2005;

(b) if so, the details alongwith reasons thereof; and

(c) what is the action plan of the Government to control further decline in profits?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) and (b) Sir, as per the provisional unaudited results, the net profit during the third quarter ended December, 2005 is Rs. 127.03 crores as against Rs. 190.39 crores in the corresponding period of previous year.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

The decrease in the net profit by 33.28% is mainly on account of withdrawal of Access Deficit Charges (ADC) by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) which was earlier available to MTNL on incoming calls. The adverse impact of ADC on profit is Rs. 70 crores approximately In addition, w.e.f. 02.10.2004, there was major downward revision in STD rates for calls to more than 200 Kms from Rs. 4.80 per minute to Rs. 2.40 per minute.

(c) MTNL has taken following steps to improve the net profit of the company:

* Fast expansion and provisioning of GSM and broadband connections.
* Introduction of attractive schemes to retain and expand landline subscriber base.
* Transparent and flexible tariff plans.
* Rationalization of expenditure to reduce administrative and operating cost.
* Modernization and optimizing of telecommunication network.
* Reducing staff strength by way of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and right sizing.
* Introduction of value added services.
* Increase the footprints abroad.

Backlog vacancies

*499. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2004 in his Ministry and various Departments under the Ministry;

(b) whether a special drive was carried out to fill in the above backlog vacancies;

(c) if so, the number of vacancies filled in during the last two years, Department wise; and

(d) what are the backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2006?